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ABSTRACT

This study describes the selection-recruitment process for high school basketball players in West Virginia and investigates whether the process is tied to the type of support given by individuals or groups to the high school basketball program. Analysis of data indicates that formal and informal selection-recruitment networks exist within the state and that significant links within the network are: playground leaders, other coaches, individual high school teachers and personal friends. Data indicate that athletic support networks also exist, apparently independently of the selection-recruitment network. Identified as significant links in this network are county superintendents, high school personnel, political organizations, and legal personnel. (JD)

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A COMPARISON OF SELECTION NETWORKS OF SELECTED HIGH SCHOOL AAA BASKETBALL PROGRAMS WITHIN THE STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA

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ABSTRACT

The purposes of this study were: (1) to describe the selection-recruitment process (number of interconnections associated with the coach's role) across various community types and high school sizes, (2) to investigate if the selection-recruitment process (number of interconnections) is tied to the type of support given by individual or support groups to the high school basketball program.

Twenty-six (N=26) AAA high school basketball coaches within the state of West Virginia, were administered the following questionnaires in a personal interview situation: (1) Demographic Data Sheet, (2) History of Selection, (3) Community Support, (4) Recommendation, (5) Participation, (6) Professional Service, (7) Criteria for Selection and, (8) Basketball Program Scales.

The remainder of the AAA high school basketball coaches (N=29), within the state of West Virginia, were mailed and asked to complete the Demographic Data Sheet, Criteria for Selection and History of Selection Scales.

NOTE: This paper represents a section of the researcher's dissertation: West Virginia University, Morgantown, West Virginia.

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Response was received from sixteen (N=16) AAA high school basketball coaches. A total of fourty-two (N=42) basketball coaches participated in this study. In the analysis of the data, levels of significance (alpha) were set at the .10 level.

The researcher utilized 2 (high school size: large, small) x 3 (community type: I, II, III) analysis of variance to investigate differences between high school size, community type and (1) history of selection-recruitment, (2) the extent to which basketball coaches follow the advice (concerning basketball selection-recruitment) made by support groups and individuals, (3) to investigate difference between high school size, community type and the criteria used by coaches to select-recruit basketball players to their program and (4) to investigate differences in professional service activities (visibility) between basketball coaches.

Chi-square analysis and Fisher's Exact Probability tests were used to describe the relationship between high school size, community type and (1) the extent to which support groups and individuals make recommendations concerning the basketball coach's selection decision (2) the extent to which basketball coaches seek advice from support groups and individuals (3) the amount of material and "moral" support given to the high school basketball program by intra- and extra-high school support

groups and individuals and (4) the extent to which basketball coaches are asked to speak to community organizations.

The analysis permitted the researcher to conclude that selection-recruitment networks (formal and informal) do exists in the sport of basketball, within the state of West Virginia. The following individuals were found to be significant links within the coach's selection-recruitment network: playground leaders, junior high school coach, junior varsity coach, individual high school teachers and personal friends. It was further concluded that the selection-recruitment network (formal) consists of communication networks, professional contact networks and influence networks.

The data also allowed the researcher to conclude that "athletic support networks" exists within the state of West Virginia. The following indidividdals were identified as significant links within this network: county superintendents, high school personnel, political organizations and legal personnel. The "athletic support network" appeared to be independent of the "selection-recruitment network".

Introduction

The area of athletic selection-recruitment at the college level has been of significant important to collegiate athetic coaches. The ability of these collegiate coaches to identify and recruit highly skilled athletes to their various athletic programs appears to have a positive relationship to athletic program success. Rooney (1974) has written a textbook, A Geography of American Sport, in which he attempted to theorize and explain athletic recruitment at the college level. However, to date, there are no empirical studies that describe the selection-recruitment process utilized by high school athletic coaches. In some respects the high school coach's selection-recruitment of players to his/her program is a much more difficult task than the college coach's. High school coaches must actively select-recruit from within the school for the interschool athletic program. Coaches may select-recruit potential athletes from the high school intramural program, physical education classes, or community sport recreation programs. Coaches may select or

recruit athletes on the basis of personal observations of the athlete or by being informed about an athlete's potential talents.

To further complicate the selection-recruitment process, coaches within high schools often compete among themselves for athletic talent. For example,

> The head football coach may say, "football is number one, therefore, I get the choice athletes." Coaches sometimes "raid" other sports using flattery and promises to recruit good athletes for their teams. (Rooney, 1974, p. 169)

In addition to identifying potential talent from within the high school, coaches are also confronted with the problem of identifying prospective athletic talent from within the community. Historically, high school coaches who have developed successful athletic programs have developed methods of early identification of athletic talent. Coaches may have developed professional and communication ties with various individuals and groups within the community to aid with the identification of potential talent. These same individuals or support groups may also provide various forms of material and "moral' support for the athletic program. An individual or support group who supplies services (support) to another (coach) obligates that individual. Exchange of this nature entails unspecified obligations. Coaches may reciprocate by seeking the advice of these individuals concerning his decision to select-recruit athletes to his program. Further, the

coach may feel obligated to make public speeches to these individuals and support groups if requested to do so.

There is little or no information available about the role of the high school coach in the community, and about the selection-recruitment process utilized by the coach to select athletic team members. Researchers to not completely understand what variables, if any, affect the athletic selection-recruitment process. To identify and describe existing athletic "recuriting networks" may be a significant first step in better understanding the selection-recruitment process at the high school level.

Significance of the Problem

Athletic selection-recuritment is a very complex process. It involves decision-making, community ties, and the ability to identify and solicit talent. Initially researchers have attempted to explain recruitment practices at the college level. Rooney (1974) investigated the selection-recruitment process and attempted to explain this process by offering such explanatory variables as income, occupational structure, population density, settlement pattern, climate, and athletic tradition. Rooney's analyses and explanatory variables about athletic recruitment represented a demographic explanation. Demorgraphis explanations have been criticized for their inability to explain causal relationships (Stinchombe, 1974).

The researcher believes that a unit of analysis is needed (in this study the network) that will allow researchers

to systematically investigate and describe the selection-recruitment process.

Networking and network analyses is a relatively new sociometric technique in the field of sociology. Parker (1977) concluded that networks range from groups of people linked loosely and informally to highly structured and physically tied systems. There are parents' networks, political networks, and sports leagues. Other types of networks suggested by the literature are communication networks, professional contact networks, "old boy" networks, transportation networks, and kinship networks. Current research in the study of networks for innovation and problem solving and their use for improving education; the role of person-to person communication networks in the dissemination of industrial technology; schools, groups and networks. Network studies have focused on characteristics of networks or how networks may be utilized to achieve some goal (i.e., use of personal networks to obtain a job).

To date, no network studies have been conducted investigating the selection-recruitment process utilized by high school athletic coaches. "Athletic selection-recruitment" networks appear to be a composite of communication networks, professional contact networks, kinship networks, and social networks. The role of the high school athletic coach within the athletic selection-recruitment network should become the anchor point of analysis. The role of the athletic coach appears to be tied to that of administrators, teachers, business groups, political groups, parents, and other

professionals. The extent to which these interconnects may influence the selection-recruitment process is not understood, as yet.

Knowledge gained in the area of athletic selection-recruitment will: (a) enable coaches to better understand the selection-recruitment process at the high school level, (b) provide physical educators with a better understanding of community-school ties, (c) provide physical educators with a better understanding of how support networks have been mobilized and utilized to support the athletic program, (d) provide an understanding of the role of the coach in the school and community and of the expectations that individuals may have of the coaching role.

It is believed that knowledge gained in this area will not only aid the coaches in the understanding of the selection-recruitment process, but also, that the principal concepts of networking may be used by businesses, colleges, the armed forces, and industries to aid in the recruitment of individuals to their programs. With the passage of Title IX (1972) and affirmative action legislation, these organizations must actively recruit individuals to their programs. An understanding of "recruitment-networks" is essential if this task is to be completed. Hopefully, this study will stimulate additional research in the area of network anslyses in sports.

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Scope of the Study

All of the 1978 AAA high school basketball coaches (N = 55) in West Virginia were asked to participate in this study. Twenty-six coaches (N = 26) were selected to participate. Those twenty-six coaches were personally interviewed by the researcher. Of the twenty-six coaches, eight (N = 4 small AAA high school coaches and N = 4 large AAA high school coaches) were selected from community type I (two high schools located within the same town or city, which have developed traditional rivalry programs). These eight coaches represented all of the possible community type I coaches within the state of West Virginia. Nine coaches (N = 5 small AAA high school coaches and N = 4 large AAA high school coaches) were selected from community type II (only one AAA high school located within a county). These nine coaches represented all of the possible community type II coaches located in West Virginia.

Community type III coaches were stratified by high school size (large, small). There were thirteen (N = 13) large AAA community type III schools. A complete random sample of five (N = 5) coaches was selected from these thirteen coaches. There were sixteen (N = 16) small AAA community type III coaches. A complete random sample of four (N = 4) coaches was selected from these sixteen. A total of nine (N = 9) coaches were interviewed from community type III.

The remaining twenty-nine (N = 29) AAA high school coaches were found in community type III (two or more AAA high schools located within a county--this community type contains both rural and urban high schools).

The Demographic Data Sheet, History of Selection, Community Support, Participation, Professional Service, Criteria For Selection, and Basketball Programs scales were administered in an interview session to twenty-six coaches. The Demographic Data Sheet, History of Selection, and Criteria for Selection scales were mailed to twenty-nine (N = 29) basketball coaches in community type III. These twenty-nine coaches did not take part in the personal interview session. Response was received from sixteen (N = 16) coaches.

The study initially focused on and described the dependent variables--amount of interconnections (assessed) by the History of Selection, Community Support, Participation, and Professional Service scales). The specific dependent variables investigated in this study were history (including range of selection), considerations to follow advice, recommendation to follow advice, and intra- and extra-high school support. The independent variables investigated were high school size (large, small) and community type (I, II, III). The Criteria for Selection Scale was used as a control scale. It was assumed that there would be no significant difference between community type, high school size, and

the criteria or attributes used by coaches to select potential talent. This scale provided a measure of coaching style.

Discussion of Findings

Analysis Between High School Size, Community Type, and the Selection-Recruitment Process

The literature tended to indicate that the use of network structure variables for exploring social phenomena involves the analysis of network structure in relation to the activities involved in flows along networks. The present research study attempted to study the flow of basketball players within the "selection-recruitment network" and the role of the basketball coach within this network. Additional flow elements within the "selection-recruitment network" appear to be influence, information, and support.

The researcher attempted to conceptualize the perceived influence upon the coach's selection-recruitment decision by investigating the relationship between the "selection-recruitment network" and the decision making process. Stinchcombe (1968) reported,

> The key aspect of the node in a network is that the number of options about further paths increases and decisions have to be made about which option to take. Social activities directed at decision making therefore congregate about such nodes. (p. 276)

It then appears that causal conception implies that nodal activities (selection-recruitment) generate information

needs at these nodes. The following nodes and gatekeepers were identified within the network field of the selection-recruitment network: (nodes) (a) playground, (b) junior high school and (c) high school; (gatekeepers) (a) playground leader, (b) junior high school coach, (c) junior varsity coach and (d) varisty coach.

Basketball coaches tend to satisfy their need for selection-recruitment information through informal and formal contact networks. Coaches initially appeared to utilize professional contact networks to obtain this information. Additional need for selection-recruitment information may lead to a higher frequency of interaction with these individuals. As the "selection-recruitment network" develops it begins to become more formalized in structure. The network continues to increase with the number of participants and increased interaction. The end result of the "selection-recruitment network" is a sharing of information and resources between the basketball coach and support groups and personnel. It is concluded that the "selection-recruitment network" is "caused" by a need for exchange of information and support between the basketball coach and community support groups and individuals.

The researcher can conceive of two kinds of causal connections between the selection-recruitment process and the place (high school size and community type) where the

selection-recruitment process takes place. There appears to be two types of "athletic selection-recruitment newtorks," (a) formal and (b) informal.

The Chi-Square Model of Selection-Recrutiment -- Formal Structure represents the perceived interdependence (connectedness) of the varsity basketball coaching role, gatekeepers and support groups and individuals within the selection-recruitment network (see Chart I). In addition, basketball coaches located within this formal-close network may have: (a) high visibility, (b) high degree of "moral" support, (c) dense information network, (d) support groups and individuals may tend to make few selection-recruitment recommendations and (e) an extensive history range of selection-recruitment. The physical characteristics of the formal selection-recruitment network is as follows: (a) (a) three or more "feeders", (b) 9-12 or 10-12 educational structure, (c) large recruiting pool and (d) adequate community resources available.

Basketball coaches located within the informal-loose selection-recruitment network would appear to have: (a) low visibility, (b) low "moral" support from high school and community, (c) loose information network, (d) very limited history range of selection-recruitment and (e) support individuals and groups may tend to give selection-recruitment advice to the coach. The physical characteristics of the informal selection-recruitment network would be as follows: (a) three or less "feeders",

(b) 8-12 or 9-12 educational structure, (c) small recruiting pool and (d) lack of community resources.

Diagram 1

Selection-Recruitment Network

Formal Structure

	High	Neutral	Low
Visibility	X		
Support			
Material		X	
"Moral"	X		
Information			
Seek			X
Informed	X		
History Range of Selection-Recruitment	X		
Individuals Make Recommendations			X
Educational Structure (Feeders)	X		
Selection-Recruiting Pool	X		
Community Resources	X		

Diagram 2

Selection-Recruitment Network

Informal Structure

	High	Neutral	Low
Visibility			X
Support			
Material		X	
"Moral"			X
Information			
Seek	X		
Informed			X
History Range of Selection-Recruitment			X
Individuals Make Recommendations	X		
Educational Structure (Feeders)			X
Selection-Recruiting Pool			X
Community Resources			X

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